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# Guide to Historic Interiors of Boston's Beacon Hill and Back Bay

The museums and institutions of Boston's Beacon Hill and Back Bay welcome the Society of Architectural Historians. An effort has been made to organize special openings of historic interiors for SAH visitors. Please note that most tours are limited to a maximum of ten to fifteen people, and some sites can only accommodate one tour at a time. Tours are generally from 30 to 40 minutes in length. Allow a 15 minute walk (20 minutes to the top) to reach Beacon Street across the Public Garden and Boston Common, and 30 minutes to Cambridge Street on the far side of Beacon Hill.

## 1. Boston Athenaeum; 10 1/2 Beacon Street

Renaissance Revival Style (1847-49) by Edward Clarke Cabot, the Athenaeum is an independent library nearly 200 years old with a noteworthy art, sculpture and print collection. The upper floors (1913-14) by Henry Forbes Bigelow were added when the original building was gutted, fireproofed and enlarged. The principal 1840's interiors of the 1st and 2nd floors were reinstalled with the exception of the grand staircase (sacrificed for additional library stacks). The coffered, vaulted 5th floor is one of the finest interior spaces in Boston.

1st and 2nd floor open to the public 9:00 - 5:30 Mon. - Fri. and 9:00 - 4:00 Sat. Free tours for SAH at 2:00 and 3:00 on Thurs. and Fri., March 29th and 30th.

## 2. Massachusetts State House; Beacon Street at Park Street

The interiors of this famous Federal structure (1795-98) by Charles Bulfinch have undergone a number of changes, especially in the nineteenth century. However, sensitivity to the original building, due to early historic preservation efforts, resulted in renovations that respected the Bulfinch building. This is especially true in the former House of Representatives (now Senate) Chamber where many of the decorative elements that are often assumed to be pure Federal period workmanship are actually part of a dramatic mid-nineteenth century renovation. The most intact room from the Bulfinch era is the original Senate Chamber, now known as the Senate Reception Room, and this has been restored recently to its original decorative scheme. The Senate President's Office (completed in 1897) has also been restored and plans have been developed for an extensive restoration program for the whole building (preliminary work by Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson and Abbot is currently underway.)

Free tours are available from the Doric Dames from 10:00 - 4:00, Monday - Friday, with the last tour at 3:30. Enter building through main portico and guides will be in Doric Hall, the central room under the dome.

## 3. Third Harrison Gray Otis House, 45 Beacon Street

Restored in the late 1950's by the American Meteorological Society for their headquarters, this is the last of the three houses designed by Charles Bulfinch for politician and real estate developer Harrison Gray Otis. The 2nd Otis House is at 85 Mount Vernon Street (privately owned), and the 1st Otis House is at 144 Cambridge Street (SPNEA, see number 8, below). Interiors are of interest especially for the innovative floor plan, including an oval ballroom which originally looked onto a side garden. The front parlor and the stairhall retain their original architectural features. Other rooms contain a history of mantelpiece styles reflecting changing architectural taste in the first 100 year of occupancy, including examples of the Greek, Gothic, Rococo and Georgian revivals. Of special note is the original Carriage House.

Free tours will be available by Mrs. Spengler, wife of emeritus director Dr. Spengler of the AMS who oversaw the purchase and restoration of the house. Open to SAH from 1:00 - 4:00 on Thur. and Fri., March 29th and 30th.

4. William Hickling Prescott House; 55 Beacon Street

Headquarters of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.  
Built in 1808 by Asher Benjamin, known for his American Builders' Guides, as twin houses for James Smith Colburn, a Boston merchant, and his sister. The collection features antique furnishings, fine Export Trade porcelain and English ceramics and a large costume collection. The study of historian William Hickling Prescott who resided here from 1845-59 has been restored.  
Period costumes and an architectural exhibition will be on display for SAH.  
Tours for SAH on the half-hour from 1:00 - 4:00 on Thurs. and Fri., March 29th and 30th. \$2.50 per person.

5. Gibson House Museum; 137 Beacon Street

The Gibson Society, organized in 1936 by Charles Hammond Gibson, shows the Gibson family home as a Victorian House museum, illustrating the lifestyle of the Back Bay. Designed by Edward Clarke Cabot and built in 1859, Gibson House was one of the first houses on the new land of the Back Bay. It was built for a merchant's widow and was lived in by three generations of the Gibson family. Interior areas open for tour include the original coal shed, kitchen and laundry rooms in the basement and three floors of the public and family rooms. Decorations span the period from 1859 to the 1930's with a concentration from the 1870's to 1890's.  
Tours for SAH on the half-hour from 11:00 - 5:00 on Thurs. and Fri., March 29th and 30th and open on Sat. and Sun. with tours at 2:00, 3:00 and 4:00. \$3.00 per person.

6. Nichols House Museum; 55 Mount Vernon Street

The house, built in 1804 and attributed to Charles Bulfinch, is shown as a family home of the 19th and early 30th century. It is furnished with ancestral portraits, Flemish tapestries, oriental rugs, European and Asian art, and works by Augustus Saint-Gaudens. The museum was established in 1961 by the late Rose Standish Nichols, noted landscape architect and lifelong pacifist.  
Open Mon., Wed. and Sat. from 1:00 - 5:00. \$3.00 per person. Tours for SAH 1:00 - 4:00, Thurs. and Fri., March 29th and 30th.

7. Boston African American National Historic Site - the African Meeting House; 46 Joy Street

Operated by the National Park Service, the recent award-winning restoration of the African Meeting House exhibits the meeting house built by and for black Bostonians in 1806. Known as the "Black Faneuil Hall", this is the site where the anti-slavery societies of William Lloyd Garrison began, and it is from the African Meeting House that Frederick Douglas recruited the black Massachusetts 54th Regiment in the Civil War.  
Open seven days a week from 9:00 - 5:00, last tour 4:00. Call 742-5415 for appointment to tour the meeting house. Two hour walking tours of the Black Heritage Trail are also available by appointment.

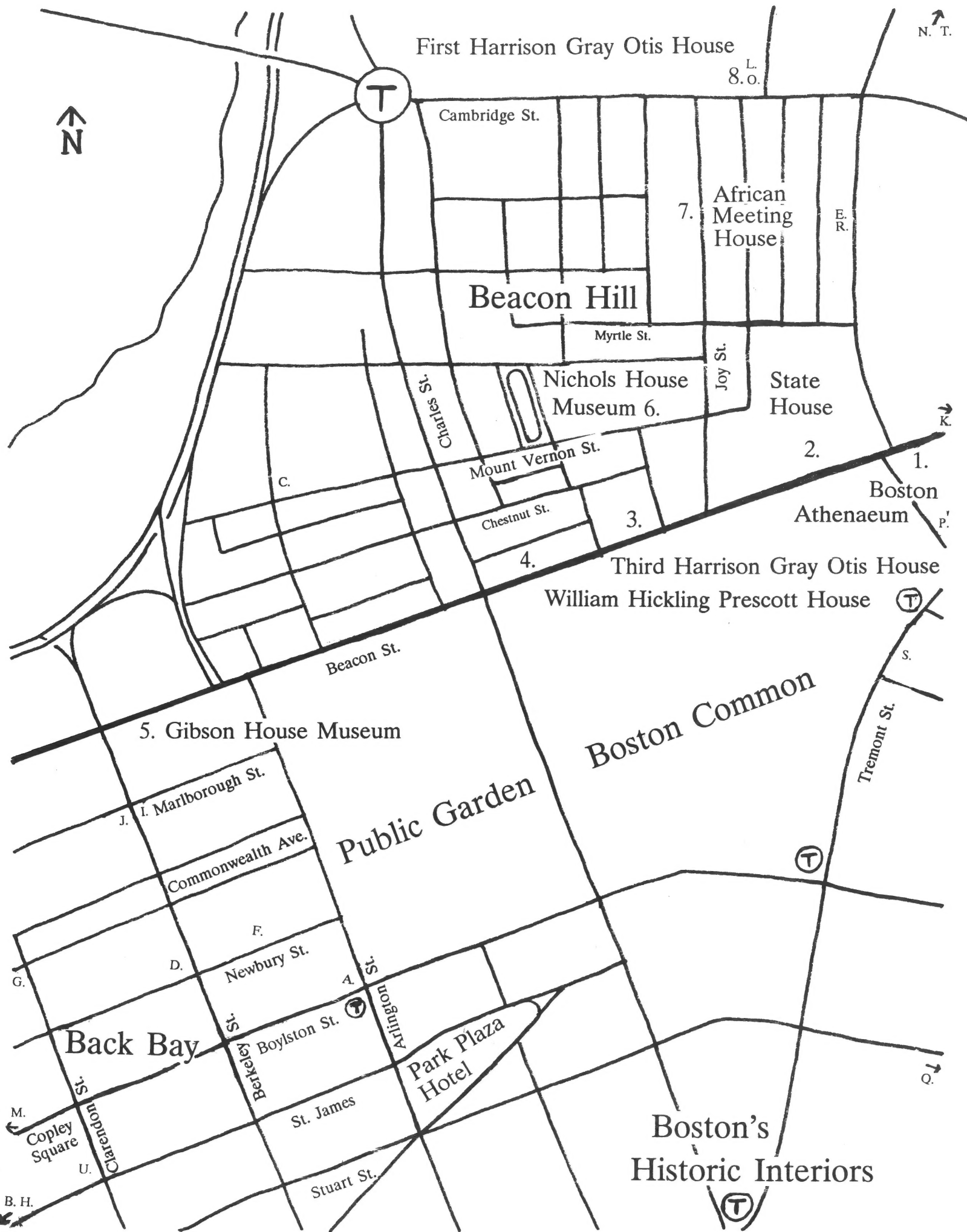
8. First Harrison Gray Otis House; 141 Cambridge Street

Headquarters for the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) since 1916, the Otis House received a major restoration of the interiors with documented wallpapers, paint colors and furnishing plans in the 1970's. Commissioned in 1795 and designed by Charles Bulfinch, this was the first home of three Bulfinch designs for Otis, a lawyer and politician, as he made his fortune developing real estate on Beacon Hill. The interiors are furnished to the 1785 - 1820 period. The 2nd Otis House is at 85 Mount Vernon Street (privately owned), and the 3rd Otis House is at 45 Beacon Street (see number 3, above).  
Open Tues. - Sat. from 12:00 - 4:00 with tours on the hour. \$3.00 Adults, \$2.50 Seniors, \$1.50 children under 12.

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Select list of Historic Churches  
of Boston's Beacon Hill and Back Bay (unless noted),  
listing architect, date of construction,  
and time of services (on Sunday unless noted); \*marks open during day.

- A. Arlington Street Church (Unitarian Universalist), Arthur Gilman, 1859-61. 351 Boylston St. at Arlington St.  
Services: 11:00 am.
- B. Basilica of our Lady of Perpetual Help (Mission Church, Roman Catholic), Shickel & Ditmars, 1876, Towers by Franz Untersee (Green Line "E" Train to Brigham Circle, left on Tremont St.: the towers are visible from the Museum of Fine Arts area of Huntington Ave.) \*through rectory. 1545 Tremont St., between Roxbury Crossing/Columbus Ave. and Brigham Circle/Huntington Ave. (Mission Hill, Roxbury).  
Mass: Saturday 4:00 pm., Sunday 8:00, 10:00, 11:15 am. (Spanish), 12:30, 6:30 pm.
- C. Church of the Advent (traditionalist Anglo-Catholic/Episcopalian), John Sturgis, 1883. 30 Brimmer St. at Mt. Vernon St.  
Services: 8:00 said mass, 9:00 sung mass, 11:00 solemn mass.
- D. Church of the Covenant (UCC/Presbyterian), Richard Upjohn, 1867 with Tiffany windows and lantern. 67 Newbury St. at Berkeley St.  
Service: 10:00 am.
- E. Dignity (Roman Catholic) at Saint John the Evangelist, Soloman Willard, 1831, chancel by Henry Vaughan and R.A. Cram. 35 Bowdoin St. (behind State House).  
Service: 5:30 pm. Sunday.
- F. Emmanuel Church (Episcopal), Alexander Esty, 1870's, service features Bach cantata. \*chapel. 15 Newbury Street between Arlington and Berkeley Sts.  
Service: 11:00 am.
- G. First Baptist Church (American Baptist), H.H. Richardson, 1870-72, sculpture by F.-A. Bartholdi. 110 Commonwealth Ave. at Clarendon St.  
Service: 11:00 am.
- H. First Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Science Mother Church), Brigham Coveney & Bisbee. 250 Massachusetts Ave. at Huntington Ave.  
Service: 10:00 am. and 7:00 pm.
- I. First Lutheran Church, Pietro Belluschi, 299 Berkeley Street at Marlborough St.  
Service: 8:30 and 11:00 am.
- J. First and Second Church (Unitarian Universalist), Facade and Tower by Ware & Van Brunt, 1870's, Church by Paul Rudolph. 64 Marlborough St. at Berkeley St.  
Service: 11:00 am.
- K. King's Chapel (Unitarian Universalist Christian), Peter Harrison, 1749-54. \*58 Tremont St. at School St.  
Service: 11:00 am.
- L. Metropolitan Community Church (at Old West Church), Asher Benjamin, 1806. 131 Cambridge St. at Hancock St.  
Service: 7:00 pm.
- M. New Old South Church (Congregational, UCC), Cummings & Sears 1875-77. \*645 Boylston St. at Dartmouth St. (Copley Square).  
Service: 11:00 am.
- N. Old North Church - Christ Church (Episcopal), 1723. \*193 Salem St. (North End).  
Holy Communion 8:30 and 11:00 am.
- O. Old West Church (Methodist), Asher Benjamin, 1806. 131 Cambridge St. at Hancock St.  
Service: 11:00 am.
- P. Park Street Church (Congregational), Peter Banner, 1809, 1 Park St. at Tremont St.  
Service: 10:30 am. and 6:00 pm.
- Q. Saint James the Great (Roman Catholic), Patrick Keely, 1870's. 125 Harrison Ave. (Chinatown).  
Sung Mass: 11:30 am.
- R. Saint John the Evangelist (progressive, inclusive Anglo-Catholic/Episcopalian), Soloman Willard, 1831, chancel by Henry Vaughan and R.A. Cram in the early 20th century; America's first Cowley Father's monastery (Society of St. John the Evangelist), Cowley Father's present monastery by R.A. Cram is on the Charles River in Cambridge. 35 Bowdoin St. (behind State House).  
Mass: 10:30 am. (choir, chant)
- S. Saint Paul's Cathedral (Episcopalian), Alexander Parris (interior altered extensively). \*138 Tremont St. across from Park St. "T" Station.  
Holy Eucharist 9:00 and 11:00 am. Daily masses as posted.
- T. Saint Stephen's (Roman Catholic), Charles Bulfinch, 1802-04. \*401 Hanover St. (North End).  
Mass: Saturday 9:00 am., 5:15 pm., Sunday 8:30 and 11:00 am.
- U. Trinity Church (Episcopal), H.H. Richardson, 1872-77. interior and windows by John LaFarge, several windows by William Morris & Edward Burne-Jones. \*Copley Square facing the Boston Public Library.  
Holy Communion: 8:00 and 11:00 am.



First Harrison Gray Otis House

8.<sup>L.O.</sup>

Cambridge St.

7. African Meeting House

E. R.

Beacon Hill

Myrtle St.

Nichols House Museum 6.

Joy St.

State House

2.

1. Boston Athenaeum

Mount Vernon St.

Chestnut St.

3.

Third Harrison Gray Otis House  
William Hickling Prescott House

Beacon St.

5. Gibson House Museum

J. I. Marlborough St.

Commonwealth Ave.

Public Garden

Boston Common

F. Newbury St.

Back Bay

4. Berkeley St.

Boylston St.

Arlington St.

Park Plaza Hotel

St. James

Stuart St.

Boston's Historic Interiors

Copley Square

M.

U.

B. H.

N. T.

K.

P.

S.

T.